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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3378

INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001088

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, IIP, ECA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV SCUL KPAO TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MEDIA REACTION TO AUGUST POST EVENTS

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: August saw media provide generally accurate and favorable coverage of U.S. Government-related events in Turkmenistan. Media accurately covered the CENTCOM delegation's August 15 visit to Turkmenistan, with most of the foreign news agencies largely referring to Turkmenistan Government official outlets in their reports on the visit. Also, media accurately highlighted the recent USG equipment donation to the State Counternarcotics Service of Turkmenistan, USAID's workshop on local self-governance, and the annual USG programs alumni reunion. END SUMMARY.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT U.S. CENTCOM DELEGATION VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

¶3. (U) On August 15, the government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen, Russian and English) posted an accurate short report on U.S. CENTCOM General David Petraeus' visit. The same report was carried on state-run dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 39,091) on August 17.

¶4. (U) On August 16, Turkmen opposition website "Gundogar" (Russian) and Russian news agency "IA REGNUM" (Russian), referring to state media, accurately highlighted the visit. On August 17, "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" (RFE/RL) Turkmen Service and an independent news website "TURKMENinform" (Russian) also posted accurate stories on the visit. The RFE/RL story accurately quoted the embassy spokesman on the visit. The following day, Kyrgyzstan based "CA-NEWS" (Russian) and Kazakh News agency "Kazakhstan Newsline" (English) also posted accurate articles on the visit. "Kazakhstan Newsline" referred to the RFE/RL story.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT U.S. EMBASSY'S EQUIPMENT DONATION TO THE COUNTER NARCOTICS SERVICE OF TURKMENISTAN

¶5. (U) On August 6, Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian) reprinted a post-issued press release on the U.S. Embassy's donation of vehicles and counter narcotics equipment to the State counter narcotics service of Turkmenistan. The following day, "US Fed News" (English) also picked up on the Embassy press release.

AZERI NEWS WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS USAID SUPPORT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE

IN TURKMENISTAN

¶6. (U) On August 10-11, Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian, English) accurately reprinted the post-issued press release on USAID and UN Development Program's organized workshop to support local self-governance in Turkmenistan.

U.S. WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS ANNUAL ALUMNI REUNION

¶7. (U) On August 13, "Targeted News Service" (English), referring to the Embassy's website, accurately reported on post's annual Alumni Reunion. The event took place on August 8-9, and gathered the alumni of various U.S. Government sponsored exchange programs.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Throughout August, media continued to favorably cover post-organized events and USAID projects. However, several journalists with state-run news organizations reported that their "editors" would not allow them to provide in-depth reporting on our Alumni Reunion given "the existing tough situation related to Turkmen students' study abroad." This obviously refers to problems that students have faced departing to study at the American University in Central Asia. END COMMENT.

MILES